

# COWLITZ COUNTY EXTENSION EDUCATOR

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## WSU Extension

### Cowlitz County

360-577-3014

1946 3rd Ave.

Longview, WA 98632

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Cowlitz County WSU Extension Office is **CLOSED** to the **PUBLIC**.

Extension Staff will still be available via phone or email.

Please call or email:

Carlee Dowell for General Information at 360-577-3014 ext. 0 or [dowellc@co.cowlitz.wa.us](mailto:dowellc@co.cowlitz.wa.us)

Gary Fredricks for Master Gardeners at 360-577-3014 ext. 3 or [garyf@wsu.edu](mailto:garyf@wsu.edu)

Jennifer Leach for 4-H, Youth Programs and Strengthening Families Program at 360-577-3014 ext. 4 or [jleach@wsu.edu](mailto:jleach@wsu.edu)

Jerry Petrick for SBDC at 360-578-5449 or [jerry.petrick@wsbdc.org](mailto:jerry.petrick@wsbdc.org)

Elizabeth Stratton for SNAP– Ed at 360-577-3014 ext. 7 or [elizabeth.stratton@wsu.edu](mailto:elizabeth.stratton@wsu.edu)



## Cowlitz County

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EXTENSION



*Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office*

## Most Plants Can Use a Drink

The cool, wet weather can easily deceive us into thinking that our garden soils are holding enough water to sustain our plants. Even though our garden soils may feel damp, they still may not have enough water to supply plant needs.

Hot, dry weather affects plants differently. Some plants wilt. Wilting results when water loss by the leaves is greater than uptake by the roots. It's easy to diagnose wilting in flowers and many vegetables. Their leaves collapse, droop and don't appear turgid or stiff. Blossoms fade and die soon after opening. Tomatoes and corn exhibit symptoms seldom seen in other vegetables. Tomato leaves roll under, while corn leaves roll up. Many garden crops abort their flowers if the weather is too hot and dry. Tomatoes, peppers, squashes, eggplants, melons and pumpkins are notorious for this condition.

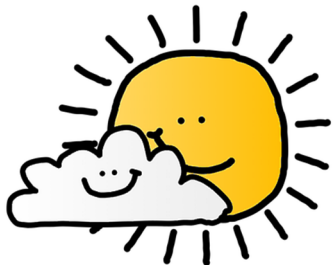


Established trees and shrubs are less likely to show wilt symptoms. Instead trees and shrubs exhibit characteristics classified as scorch. Scorch shows up as browning of leaf margins and the tissue between the veins. Leaves feel crisp or leathery. The contrast between the normal green color and the brown color of scorch is obvious.

One of the best methods for telling if plants have enough water is to use the "screw driver test." Simply press the screwdriver into the soil. It will easily penetrate moist soil, but stops when it is hard and dry. Since the top layer of soil will dry out faster than the rest of the soil profile, make sure you sample soil at a depth of between 4-8 inches, or below this depth if you are concerned with deep moisture. With so much variation among water systems and the amount of water distributed by sprinklers and soaker hoses, it's impossible to specify exactly how long a sprinkler should be left on in order to replenish soil moisture to a particular depth. This is best determined by leaving the sprinkler on for a specified period of time and then measuring the depth of soil moisture.

Trees and shrubs should be watered to a depth of 18 -20 inches. The amount of water to apply in any situation will depend on the soil type. Sandy soils absorb

## Most Plants Can Use a Drink (Cont.)



water faster (about 2 inches per hour), followed by loam soils (3/4 inch per hour). Clay soils have the slowest absorption rate (1/2 inch per hour). By allowing water to penetrate deeper into the soil profile, you are encouraging deeper rooting and a more tolerant plant. Frequent light irrigations will lead to plants that have a shallow root system and are more prone to wa-

ter stress.

Fortunately, lawns are equipped for hot, dry conditions. Instead of wilting and dying like many plants, they simply go dormant. Like a hibernating bear, a dormant lawn does not need food or water. When conditions are more ideal, usually in September, the grass will awaken and turn green. A newly established lawn may need to be watered throughout the summer to reduce drought stress and to prevent the plants from actually dying. Lawns with a thick thatch layer are also more prone to dying and thus may need watering.

Don't water on hot, windy afternoons. You'll lose more than half of your water to evaporation. Early morning watering lets the water soak into the soil. It also allows the plant foliage to dry off fast once the sun rises which helps prevent plant diseases. Remember, that anything planted this year and any trees or shrubs planted over the last two years need extra water. Even plants listed as drought tolerant will need extra water if newly planted. Vegetables and fruit plantings need water, especially during fruiting. In addition, plants in containers will need to be watered more often, perhaps daily, depending on temperature and wind.

Finally, don't forget to mulch. Mulching helps keep the soil cool and moist while suppressing water-stealing weeds. Apply 2 to 4 inches of wood chips, straw or other mulching material to garden and landscape plants. Applying more than 4 inches of mulch may deprive roots of oxygen. Excessive mulch can also make it difficult for any water to reach the roots.

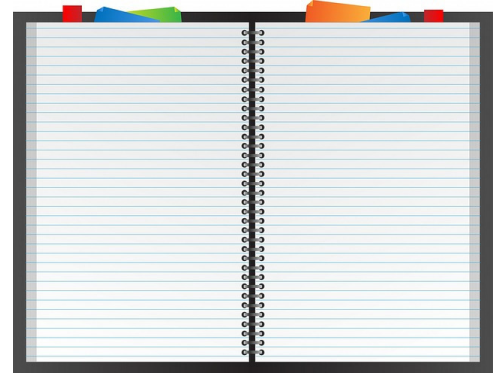
This Article was prepared by Gary Fredricks Small Farms, Urban Horticultural and Master Gardener Coordinator, and Cowlitz County Administrative Director

## Parenting Resource – Creating a daily schedule

In this “back-to-school” time, parents are preparing to either home school their children or assist their children with at-home, virtual learning with no known end in sight. So, how do we get into a routine at home or improve on the routine we currently have going? Scheduling is something that helps us to establish a sense of comfort and order through routine.

Families can plan together, perhaps using a series of family meetings, a daily schedule that represents household needs, learning time, and personal needs, allowing student voice and choice in the process. The Creating a Daily Schedule resource at <https://extension.wsu.edu/cowlitz/> and [https://www.awsp.org/docs/default-source/awsp-blog-documents/schedulinghomeenvironment-r2.pdf?sfvrsn=4ba00e7b\\_2](https://www.awsp.org/docs/default-source/awsp-blog-documents/schedulinghomeenvironment-r2.pdf?sfvrsn=4ba00e7b_2) suggests seven steps to create a schedule that has flexibility to meet individual and household needs.

- Determine needs.
- Establish time frames.
- Build in suggested activities and other recommendations from schools.
- Find a healthy balance.
- Prepare a workspace.
- Allow for flexibility.
- Post the schedule (s).



This online resource suggests some household activities by grade groups K-5 and 6-12 in the areas of:

- Basic needs.
- Household needs.
- Learning/academic work.
- Physical activity and free time/choice activities.

Also included for your perusal are examples of 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. schedules for grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12

Additional parenting resources can be found at <https://extension.wsu.edu/cowlitz/4h/parenting-programs/parent-resources/>

## TIME TO PAY ATTENTION TO CHANGES

Heading into the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter we must come to grips with a number of realities we haven't faced in our lifetimes.

There are three 'pandemics' impacting us at the moment:

COVID-19  
 economic collapse  
 protests against racial injustice

Three months and counting of stay-at-home restrictions, business shutdowns, and the confluence of these pandemics has have taken a heavy toll. And these conditions show few signs of going away anytime soon.

As the COVID-19 virus continues to spread and surge (Apple and others re-closing stores they had recently re-opened is a sobering reminder), the uncertainty and anxiety is being reinforced.

It is not just we business owners who are unsettled by all this. So are our customers! A perpetual state of uncertainty is not very appealing or desirable to many.

There is an opportunity presenting itself along with all this uncertainty:

*When 'Everything is changing,' when 'Nobody expects to go back to normal,' what better time to reinvent your business? **NOW** is the time to make sure that the business is working for YOU, the business owner.*

Has this been your experience?

- ✦ Maybe as you've gradually re-opened, it has been on a very reduced schedule (e.g., 5 days per week – Wednesday through Sunday – 8 hours a day. Key staff are working full time; online sales are happening 24/7.)
  - Why rush to expand those hours? Just because that is what we used to do? Have you looked at the financials from this 'modified' operating format? Perhaps you are making more profit working less hours than before?
- ✦ What about your vendors?
  - Which vendors do you most want to continue with? Grow with? Which vendors or lines or categories are you most comfortable discontinuing? Customers understand that change IS and now is a great time to re-set expectations.

Think about one or two restaurants you frequent. As they have re-opened, how has

## TIME TO PAY ATTENTION TO CHANGES (Cont.)

their menu changed? What's gone? What's featured more? What does that suggest about their thinking? Are their hours reduced? Offerings limited? Do you think they are able to optimize their labor and food costs to achieve higher profits on lower or similar sales volume?

✦ These same realities may apply to your customers. Which customer groups do you most want to serve? Why? How much is it costing your business – in time, money, resources – to attract and serve those groups? Might there be customer groups you could stop spending resources to attract - if they come in, fine. Just do not spend anything pursuing them.

What else might need to be re-invigorated? How about your staff? How might you take better advantage of their talents and strengths? Or, is it time to bring in some new people with different skills/knowledge?



In retailing, change has always been the name of the game. And the events and experiences of 2020 have magnified this truth significantly.

For the savvy retailer, these unprecedented times offer an overriding excuse, and wonderful cover, for all manner of change in your business.

There will be no better opportunity to reinvent your business – especially for those serving the public. Not only what you want, but what do your ideal customers really want from your firm? What is your 'brand promise'? What does your business deliver (literally and figuratively) better than anyone?

Ask yourself:

What are the conditions/marketplace/competition/opportunities you expect to be in play 30/60/90 days from now? What are your plans to take advantage of those possibilities? Set the wheels in motion NOW – don't waste the lead-time you have before you.

Remember – your informed good judgement is your best resource and tool in times of uncertainty.

This article was prepared by Jerry Petrick, MBA and Senior Certified Business Advisor with the Washington State University (WSU) Small Business Development Center (SBDC). Jerry provides confidential business advisory services at no cost to the client. To make an appointment email him at: [jerry.petrick@wsbdc.org](mailto:jerry.petrick@wsbdc.org)

